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Members of the public who wish to provide public comment are encouraged to submit those via email in advance of the meeting. For these comments to be read into the record, they should be submitted at least three hours in advance of the meeting start time. Please email Donna King at [dking@norwalkct.org](mailto:dking@norwalkct.org) to provide written public comment prior to the meeting.

**COMMON COUNCIL  
SPECIAL MEETING  
FEBRUARY 9, 2021  
VIA TELECONFERENCE**

Mayor Rilling called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. and led the Assembly in reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

**I. ROLL CALL**

Ms. King called the Roll.

The following Common Council members were present:

Council at Large:      Mr. Gregory Burnett              Ms. Dominique Johnson  
                                 Mr. Nicholas Sacchinelli  
                                 Ms. Barbara Smyth

District A:              Mr. David Heuvelman

District B:              Ms. Darlene Young              Ms. Diana Revolus

District C:              Mr. John Kydes

District D:

District E:              Mr. Thomas Livingston              Ms. Lisa Shanahan

At Roll Call there were ten (10) Common Council members present and five (5) absent (Mr. Langella; Mr. Roberts; Mr. Theodoridis; Mr. Keegan and Mr. Tsiranides). A Quorum was present.

Also present were Mayor Harry Rilling, City Clerk, Donna King and Corporation Counsel, Mario Coppola.

## **II. PRESENTATION OF THE 2021-22 OPERATING BUDGET**

Mr. Dachowitz presented the 2021-2022 operating budget. He said the budget books will be delayed, because Ms. Fogel had a medical emergency and will be out for several weeks.

Mr. Dachowitz reviewed the budget process and the timeline. The final budget and tax levy are set on May 3, 2021. He noted it is a lengthy process.

Mr. Dachowitz explained the laws of economics and how they apply to this budget. He said there are many good requests, on both sides, but they have to make choices and trade offs. He reviewed the law of diminishing returns and said he tries to get the best return on the investment.

Mr. Dachowitz presented the City wide and Norwalk Public Schools operating budget. He said the total recommended budget is \$400.6 million. Included in the City's budget are expenditures on behalf of the Board of Education. He said the City is spending money on behalf of the Board of Education and that is not appropriate. He said that

about \$29 million is on behalf of the Board of Education. The City's net expenditures are \$159.1 million.

Mr. Dachowitz highlighted the split of operating expenditures between the City and the Norwalk Public Schools. He said the schools use 61% of the local taxes. He said there are challenges in establishing budgets for the Norwalk Public Schools and is recommending an increase of \$4.2 million or 2% over last year's approved amount of \$208.4 million. Connecticut State law prohibits a City government from reducing a school budget below the prior year total. The Mayor, Board of Estimate and Taxation and Common Council are only allowed to establish an upper amount on Norwalk Public school expenditures.

Mr. Dachowitz discussed the Norwalk Public Schools and City operations efficiency study. He said they already conducted a cybersecurity review and noted that recommendations have already been implemented. He thanked Ms. Connor for developing the RFP for the efficiency study and noted that it was a very complex RFP. He described the RFP process and said it was narrowed down to four finalists and they were about to make a selection; however, they took a pause to bring Dr. Estrella up to speed. He said he hopes a firm will be selected shortly.

Mr. Dachowitz gave an example of Board of Education staffing and enrollment and said that was why this study was needed. He said there is a tendency on the projection to be higher than the enrollment. There is a forecasting inconsistency and that he does not understand the numbers. He said an expert could understand these numbers.

Ms. Smyth asked if there is an explanation if students are disengaged due to Covid. Mr. Dachowitz said he took the numbers, but does not have an explanation.

Mr. Dachowitz reviewed operating budget expenditures by department. He highlighted the contingency line.

The total recommended FY 2022 budget is \$4.6 million which is 3.9% over last fiscal year.

Mr. Kydes asked if there was a dollar amount for the insurance increase. Mr. Dachowitz will get those figures.

Mr. Dachowitz reviewed the unrestricted/unassigned fund balance (rainy day fund). He said that this year they plan to draw down \$8 million. He noted that this year, they expected to draw down \$6 million, but they did not have to draw down all of the money. They did not draw down \$5.1 million. The Board of Education and the City gave them \$4 million of the surplus and put it into a non-expiring account. In addition, \$1 million went to certain departments.

Mr. Dachowitz said he hopes this year, they will not have to draw down the entire \$8 million. He said the residents are under financial pressure and he tried to accommodate them by giving relief on the mill rate and tax bills. Mr. Dachowitz reviewed the proper use of a fund balance.

Mr. Dachowitz presented the tax levy by district. He said this is a very tough budget year; he feels this budget is balanced and fair. Mr. Dachowitz will send the presentation to the Common Council members.

Mayor Rilling thanked Mr. Dachowitz and Ms. Fogel. He said this is a very difficult budget year. He said they have to be very fiscally responsible. He said he is going to tell all department heads that they can't look at any increased over Mr. Dachowitz's recommendations unless it is critical.

### **III. ADJOURNMENT**

**\*\* MR. REVOLUS MOVED TO ADJOURN**

**\*\* MOTION PASSED UNANIMOUSLY**

There was no further business and the meeting was unanimously adjourned at 7:37 p.m.

ATTEST: \_\_\_\_\_

Donna King, City Clerk